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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

BEAUTY AND UGLINESS. By VERNON LEE and C. ANSTRUTHER-THOMAS. New York: John Lane & Co., 1912.

THOSE who are accustomed to Vernon Lee's literary and scenic essays will be surprised at the technical nature of this volume, which aims at giving a tentative basis for æsthetic theory. The volume is not easy reading, nor for the technical student has the author taken the time and trouble to give her book systematic structure. The original basis of the book was an article in the *Quarterly Review* for April, 1900. In this essay the author distinguishes between æsthetics and art. She points out that while all demands involved in every form of art are demands of pleasure, many of them are consistent with the perception and production of ugliness. Unfortunately the author has not troubled to supply her essay with illustrative examples, but to a lover of painting this assertion is conclusively proved by such painting as Tura's. No one can question its lasting interest or value any more than its striking ugliness. On the other hand, Vernon Lee gives the rather intricate and involved definition of æsthetics that its primary object is differentiated by the attempt to avoid as much ugliness and attain as much beauty as the particular circumstances will admit. Having carefully made this distinction between the nature and demands of art (pp. 4 and 5) and the nature and demands of æsthetics, the writer further on gives the following confusing definition, not of æsthetics, but of art:

"Art, therefore, is the manifestation of any group of faculties, the expression of any instincts, the answer to any needs, which is to any extent qualified, that is to say, restrained, added to, altered, or deflected, in obedience to a desire totally separate from any of these, possessing its own reasons, its own standards, and its own imperative, which desire is the æsthetic desire. And the quality answering to this æsthetic desire is what we call Beauty; the quality which it avoids or diminishes is Ugliness."

The author then proceeds to refute Ruskin's definition which treats beauty as servant to utility. She argues that wherever art is not disturbed by a desire for novelty comparison between works of art of different kinds, periods, and climates will show a tendency to recurrence of proportions, shapes, patterns, and composition showing that mankind has always normally preferred certain peculiarities of symmetry and asymmetry, balance and accent. As one of the most important contributions of modern æsthetics to an ultimate theory of beauty, Vernon Lee gives the distinction now made between the qualities of the visible figure and the qualities suggested by the identification of this form

with a given object; the definite distinction between the thing seen and the thing suggested. The thorough realization of form implies in the beholder a definite activity; a reaction which is pleasant or unpleasant as it facilitates or hampers our own vitality. At this point we come to what may be considered the most vital contribution of this volume to a theory of æsthetics; namely, the increase of vitality through æsthetic perception. Titchener's theory of Empathy or Lipps's *Einfühlung* is the subject of the second long essay, while one hundred pages are given to casual extracts from the gallery diaries of Vernon Lee and her two assistants. These extracts are distinctly disappointing. More than anything else they form a mass of unsorted material for the psychologist. The interplay of the different arts—*i.e.*, music and painting—in Vernon Lee's temperament offers less than she evidently fancied to the untechnical student. In the main, what one derives from these diary extracts is that the habitual student derives much less joy from the contemplation of works of art than the general observer. Important, however, in the highest degree, and easily upheld by any lover of art who is at the same time capable of watching the reactions upon himself of the contemplation of art, is the quickened respiration and adjustment of equilibrium which Vernon Lee notes as the natural reaction of æsthetic enjoyment. One often hears the uninitiate express this by saying that the effect of looking at a beautiful painting is the same as drinking a glass of champagne.

Although narrowing somewhat the range of æsthetic empathy in the explanation of artistic phenomena, Vernon Lee asserts that every æsthetic form embodies in its individual reality the emphatic preferences of one individual, so that the æsthetic form which gives us joy is giving us the finest vital rhythms and patterns of a rich, harmonious individual and the scheme, so to speak, of what has proved most beneficial and enduring in the vital modes of the race.

To this one must add that while the present writer speaks of the satisfaction of the physical needs—sleep, food, generation, as being the responses of the individual need, unrelated to the persistence of personality, she says that wherever the individual has come to exist as a part of the universe, or as a soul, under penalty of destruction, the microcosm must stamp itself upon the macrocosm, thus reducing chaos to harmony and to definite structure. In this wise, art becomes a school for the unity of purpose and plan, without which consciousness would disintegrate and the soul disappear.

TENNYSON AND HIS FRIENDS. Edited by HALLAM, LORD TENNYSON. London: Macmillan & Co., 1912.

All that is necessary to know of Lord Tennyson as man and as poet is now before the public. Both of the present Lord Tennyson's *Memoirs* of his father have partaken of the nature of a medley or a collection of estimates. In the former volume there were reminiscences by Gladstone, Jowett, Lecky, Locker-Lampson, Palgrave, Tyndall, and Aubrey de Vere. To the present volume, Lady Tennyson contributes a simple but interesting chapter on her early youth and pre-marital acquaintance with the poet. The words of her story are as clear-cut, sincere, and lovely as the line drawing of her profile by Watts which precedes it. William Rawnslay